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MSP bomb squad searches home of prison officer facing drug charge

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A Michigan Department of Corrections sergeant who has been the subject of neighbor complaints because of frequent explosions and gunfire on his property was arrested Friday, Feb. 20, and is charged with two felonies after his home was searched, according to court records and police officials.

Casey Charles Wagner, 33, of Ionia Township, an arsenal sergeant at Bellamy Creek Correctional Facility, is charged with possession of methamphetamine and possession of a firearm while committing a felony, online court records show.

The Michigan State Police bomb squad "assisted with a search warrant and disposal of explosives that were located at the residence," MSP Special Lt. Patrick Agema said in a Feb. 23 email, adding that the Ionia County Sheriff's Office is the lead agency in the investigation.

Ionia County Sheriff Charlie Noll said in a Feb. 23 email that he didn't want to comment until the ongoing investigation is completed.

"The detectives still have a lot of follow up to do," Noll said. "I do not want to hinder this investigation by exposing what very little we know at this time."

Wagner could not be reached for comment on Feb. 23, when calls to his cell phone went directly to voicemail, which was full.

In 64-A District Court in Ionia, Magistrate David Wirth on Feb. 23 entered not guilty pleas for Wagner at his arraignment and set a $100,000 bond, after Ionia County Prosecutor Kyle Butler told him more charges against Wagner are likely. Bond conditions include abstaining from alcohol and drugs, submitting to drug testing and counseling, and possessing no firearms or explosives. Wagner was represented at the hearing by a public defender but told the court he planned to retain a private attorney. Wagner's next court appearance is set for March 4.

Jenni Riehle, a spokeswoman for the MDOC, said Feb. 23 that Casey has been placed on a "stop order," banning him from prison property, and is under investigation by the department.

More: Gunfire, explosions ring out from shooting range next to her home. And nobody can help.

Neighbors reported years of explosions, gunfire

Wagner's relationship with his neighbors — and the lack of state controls over private firing ranges like the one Wagner built behind his home — was the subject of a 2025 investigation by the Detroit Free Press.

Lois LaRoe, Wagner's nearest neighbor, has complained for years that frequent explosions from Wagner's property shook her home, damaged her hearing, and left her diagnosed with PTSD. She said Wagner also regularly fires loud guns and blares music across his property.

LaRoe, 65, told the Free Press on Feb. 22 that she returned home from work on Feb. 20 to find a large police presence at Wagner's property, including a vehicle with MSP bomb squad markings. She said an MSP officer asked her to leave her home for a few hours Feb. 20 so officers could safely detonate explosives they found on Wagner's property.

Wagner confirmed to the Free Press in 2025 that he sometimes uses Tannerite — a loud, powerful, but largely unregulated explosive — as a shooting target. Tannerite and similar products can be sold over the counter as mixing kits because each component is not explosive on its own.

But Wagner denied allegations, detailed in police reports and accounts from multiple neighbors, that he detonated homemade bombs and even used a helium balloon to send one adrift to explode over a neighboring property. He also denied firing guns and blasting loud music late at night.

LaRoe said she is hopeful that developments over the weekend may finally bring peace to her home, but she is not confident that is the case.

"It depends on what happens," she said. "I can't put my guard down."

This story has been updated to add new information.

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